1: Junod M-5 (1895-1909)1927 Thonga

685 857 Generally speaking the elder boys send the younger to commit these thefts, and the plunder is enjoyed by the whole company. They threaten to beat them if they return empty-handed. A sad fate for the youngsters—blows on all sides ; blows from the owners of the fields if they are caught, blows from their comrades if they bring nothing back with them!

Here are one or two tricks employed by the little thieves. In order to take a water-melon (khalabatla) out of a field without being noticed by the women who are busy pulling up their ground nuts, they cut the stalk and fasten it to a piece of string. The other end of this is attached to the leg of the thief, who moves away slowly, drawing the water-melon after him. When he is out of reach of the women, he hastily puts it under his arm and makes off at top speed.

To catch a hen without its making a sound, they dig a little hole behind the huts of the village, and put a few grains of maize in it. The fowl puts its head into the hole to eat the grains, and immediately the little rascal who was watching from behind a bush, rushes out, seizes it by the neck and carries it off before it can utter a single cry!

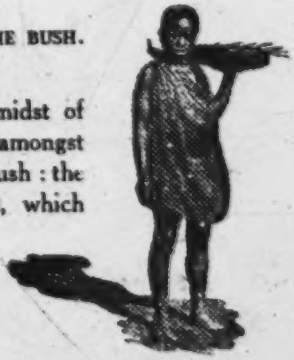
672 685 The penalty when a boy is caught is a good whipping without a fine. "Psa batjongwana ! It is an action of little boys !" These minor thefts are not considered serious.

3) Catching game.

262 203 837 Hunger is the constant companion of these boys, who do not get enough to eat at home. It is true they ate to their heart's content (shura) yesterday evening, but this morning they had only a very scanty breakfast (fihluta). They try to satisfy their never satisfied appetite by catching game : not big game of course, as they have no real weapons, but birds, field-mice, eggs in the nests (the less fresh they are, the better, because there is more meat inside!) etc. To get birds they throw their sticks at them, and are very clever at killing a partridge as it rises heavily from the grass ; or they make traps with a flexible stick to which they tie a string with a bait. They bend the stick, set the trap by means

223/857 of a little bit of wood, and when the bird puts its beak into the bait, it is caught round the neck by the string. On the borders of the lake of Rikatla, boys used to catch even big birds with these traps. They set many kinds of snares. One is a cage made of sticks of palm marrows which shuts automatically when a bird enters and eats the grain by which it has been attracted. They sometimes build two walls of sticks planted in the soil and converging to the same point, where they reach a little door provided with the trap. Hares are sometimes caught in this way. They follow the wall, and when they go through the door, they tread on a hurdle which is connected with a bent rod : the rod springs back and the hare is caught.

4) Learning the science of the bush.



Phot. G. Liengme.
A Thonga boy.

136 857 151 This life in the velt, always in the midst of Nature, develops the power of observation amongst the boys. They know everything in the bush : the big Psyche caterpillar (Eumeta cervina), which hangs from the nembe-nembe shrub (Cassia petersiana) like a little bundle of sticks, and which they call *mahambanindlwane*, " the one who walks with his house ;" the big Carabid beetle which appears with the first rain, the Anthia alveolata, marked with large hollows on the elytra and which is therefore named " the son of the smallpox ." Indeed I found in Rikatla a boy who knew that a certain white cocoon found on the branches of the nkanye tree (Sclerocarya caffra) gives birth to the splendid green Queen Moth (Argema Mimosae). [262] Having collected beetles and butterflies extensively for years, I have had an opportunity of recognizing the power of observation of these boys, who were my best hunters! Of course they particularly appreciate things edible... especially the *shitambela*, a big Buprestа beetle which they roast and suck.